

VZCZCXRO6084
PP RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0748/01 1371110
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 161110Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0832
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0219
RHMFISS/CJTJF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000748

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS, SE WILLIAMSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: UNDERCOUNTING, INTIMIDATION MAR DARFUR CENSUS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. With the census officially completed, international organizations are taking stock of census results. While UNAMID, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is preparing a detailed analysis of the exercise and expected results, preliminary observations indicate significant undercounting of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and intimidation perpetrated both against and by the civilian population in Darfur. The census sample should be large enough to produce fairly accurate results; however, the resistance encountered throughout the process makes de-linking the census and upcoming elections a top priority over the next year. END SUMMARY.

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IDPs, Movements Undercounted; Arab Nomads Overcounted
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12. (SBU) In a May 12 meeting, UNAMID Civil Affairs (CA) Chief Wariara Mbugua called census participation in the IDP camps "predictable," with about half of the camps in Darfur refusing to participate at all, some partially enumerated and a few that cooperated fully. She said that OCHA had camp residency statistics from 2007 which could be used as a guideline; however, she acknowledged that "those numbers will have increased due to continuing displacement." She noted that the majority of camps which refused to participate were those populated by SLA-Abdul Wahid supporters. Demonstrations were organized in Kalma camp, where between 4000 and 5000 IDPs marched against the census, and in Zam Zam and Abu Shouk in El Fasher. She characterized the numbers of IDPs who were not enumerated as "substantial."

13. (SBU) In general, the movements also resisted the census, and GoS enumerators were not allowed into rebel controlled areas. CA and UNFPA estimate that such areas make up 20% of the region; however, they admit that those lands are not mapped, so the actual percentage could be higher.

14. (SBU) To make matters worse, Mbugua claimed that the census had actually started a few days earlier in areas heavily populated by nomadic (i.e. Arab) groups. "It was part of a GOS strategy to both assure full enumeration and inflate actual numbers," she said.

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Intimidation of Civilians, Intimidation by Civilians
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15. (SBU) Mbugua confirmed that GoS soldiers had surrounded the IDP camp in Zalingei during the second week of the census in an attempt to pressure the IDPs into cooperating with enumerators. After two tense days, CA staff managed to broker an agreement whereby the GoS would not enter the camp, and the IDPs were not counted.

16. (SBU) By the second week of the census, Mbugua continued,

citizens had grown increasingly wary of the process, refusing to take part and threatening enumerators. As a result, some enumerators refused to go into certain neighborhoods, including outlying areas of El Fasher, for fear of being attacked. She confirmed that two teams of enumerators had been abducted south of Nyala, and that no one had heard from them since. In Sector West, a grenade was thrown into the house of an enumerator, and several others reported being threatened with knives during the course of their duties.

17. (SBU) Because of these incidents, Mbugua, who has a background in statistics and practical experience conducting censuses, suspected that there had also been "significant undercounting in urban areas." However, she was confident that the large sample size would help to show the areas that were undercounted, and produce fairly accurate results.

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Central Bureau of Statistics Refuses to Meet
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18. (SBU) Fieldoffs attempted to discuss the issues raised by UNAMID and UNFPA with the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). However the director of the North Darfur CBS office refused to meet, saying that she would not meet with any international personnel to discuss the census unless directed to do so by the CBS head office in Khartoum. (Note: In the past, local CBS officials have willingly discussed issues, including the census, with fieldoffs. End Note.)

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De-Linking Census from Elections
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18. (SBU) Mbugua worried that the problems encountered while conducting the census did not bode well for next year's elections. "Darfuris don't participate - they don't participate in the Ceasefire Commission or in restarting the stalled political process, and they didn't participate in the census," she complained. Given this history, and the fact that elections are a benchmark for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), not the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), Mbugua said that it would difficult to convince them to participate in the elections. It was important, she said, to de-link the issue of the census from the upcoming elections. The census had nothing to do with voter registration, and "we should all do everything in our power to ensure that people are not confused."

19. (SBU) Mbugua continued that a strong focus on civic education, as well as international pressure on key community leaders, would be essential to persuade Darfuris to participate in the elections. "They have disenfranchised themselves from all other mainstream participation. What's left for them but the elections?" she mused.

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Comment
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19. (SBU) Although it did not lead to the violence that some feared, the census was clearly unpopular in Darfur. It is also true that Darfuris generally link the census and elections together as part of a package "deal-we-didn't-get," and have little interest or concern for perceived CPA benchmarks. It will be crucial to engage IDP and other community leaders in the run-up to the elections, and significant public and civic information campaigns will have to be mounted to convince Darfuris that their own stakes in election results are as high as or higher than those of their Southern compatriots. IDP reaction to the census-elections package will be reported septel.

FERNANDEZ